

REQUEST FOR INITIAL GRANT PROPOSALS (RFIP)
SMART GROWTH NETWORK MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

OVERVIEW INFORMATION

FEDERAL AGENCY NAME: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation; Development, Community and Environment Division (DCED).

FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TITLE: Smart Growth Network Membership Program, Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP).

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: This is an initial announcement of a funding opportunity.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: SGNMEMB-05

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER: 66.611, Environmental Policy and Innovation Grants, authorized under Delegation of Authority I-47

DATE: Initial proposals must be submitted to U.S. EPA by 5 PM East Coast time on Friday, July 16, 2004. Award announcements are expected to be made in December 2004.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Development, Community, and Environment Division in U.S. EPA's Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation is soliciting initial proposals for a Smart Growth Network Membership Program (SGNMEMB-05, CFDA 66.611, "Environmental Policy and Innovation Grants," Delegation of Authority I-47). EPA is seeking proposals for developing and maintaining a Smart Growth Network Membership Program that will create and distribute smart growth information resources to its members. EPA expects to award one assistance agreement under this solicitation and expects to have approximately \$140,000 available for first-year funding with a ceiling of \$725,000 for the life of the agreement. Final agreements will be negotiated for a five year budget and project period, with future funding dependent on the availability of funds, agency priorities, and applicant performance. The award will be in the form of a cooperative agreement, which entails extensive involvement by U.S. EPA. Eligible applicants include incorporated nonprofit organizations incorporated or domiciled in the U.S. and U.S.-based public agencies, institutions and organizations. Cost-sharing is encouraged but not required. Only one application per applicant is permitted. Initial proposals must be submitted to EPA by 5 PM East Coast time on Friday, July 16, 2004. Award announcements are expected to be made in late December 2004. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards.

FULL TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT

Section 1:FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

U.S. EPA is seeking proposals for developing and maintaining a Smart Growth Network (SGN) membership program. This program should create and distribute information resources for its members on successfully incorporating smart growth principles in the development process. The program's activities and products should illustrate how smart growth approaches can support better environmental protection, public health, economic development, and community revitalization outcomes. The program should (1) support the development of smart growth capacity at the local, state, and regional levels, (2) facilitate public discourse about environmentally responsible development, and (3) facilitate information sharing among SGN members and between SGN members and SGN partner organizations.

The Smart Growth Network is a coalition of diverse nonprofit, business and government organizations. Called SGN partners, they share a common understanding of the relationship between quality of life and the built environment. The SGN provides a forum for raising public awareness of smart growth and the

implications of different development decisions. It promotes smart growth best practices through educational publications and other venues; develops and shares information about innovative policies; fosters collaborative approaches; and works to create opportunities for smart growth. There are currently more than 30 partners in the Network.

The SGN partners meet bimonthly and often undertake joint projects. EPA has supported and facilitated the efforts of the Smart Growth Network since its inception. A Smart Growth Network Membership and Partner Outreach Program is currently being offered through a U.S. EPA funded cooperative agreement that ends January 31, 2005. This RFIP seeks to support continuation of a similar program. The agency will obtain relevant data from the incumbent recipient if necessary to facilitate the project of a new recipient. Applicants should plan on a two-month transition at the beginning of their projects.

At a minimum, proposals must include the following core elements and must specify content and approach for each element:

1. A bimonthly or quarterly electronic or print newsletter sent to all members;
2. A member's web page linked to the Smart Growth Network web site (www.smartgrowth.org);
3. Development in the first year of the award of a smart growth primer (approximately 30 pages long) which focuses on the goals of smart growth; provides consensus based examples of smart growth from urban, suburban and rural communities; and briefly discusses key policy issues affecting smart growth implementation;
4. The creation over the life of the assistance agreement of at least two to three additional new smart growth information resources for members. These resources might include but are not limited to policy primers, case studies, fact sheets, videos, comparative analyses of smart growth costs and benefits, or related products responding to members' information needs;
5. A query response service through which members' questions about smart growth are answered (specify anticipated service level, e.g., number of queries responded to per month and average scope and depth of response);
6. An introductory information kit for new members (specify contents);
7. A strategy for working with SGN partner organizations to involve them in the development of information resources and other key activities and services (this should include plans for participating in SGN meetings and the Annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference currently sponsored by the Local Government Commission. See www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/SmartGrowth for up to date information about the conference;
8. A marketing and outreach strategy for establishing and growing the program;
9. A process for evaluating and approving program effectiveness and member satisfaction (formal surveys are not an allowable cost under this solicitation);
10. If applicable, a strategy for incorporating program income into the project (Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider incorporating a program income element in their programs -- for example, charging for shipping and handling costs for mailing materials, or charging workshop fees to cover costs. However, there should be no general fee charged for membership.); Applicants should plan on a core program that serves a minimum of 500 members and should demonstrate how larger numbers will be recruited and served.

In addition to these core requirements, applicants are encouraged to propose additional member benefits. Examples of additional program elements include but are not limited to (1) a competitive publications fund through which applicants could receive funds to reprint and/or more widely distributed exemplary smart

growth publications; copies would be provided as a service to all SGN members; or (2) a moderated electronic discussion forum.

This RFIP is being issued by the Development, Community and Environment Division (DCED) in U.S. EPA's Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation. DCED focuses on smart growth issues of regional and national significance. Smart growth development practices support national environmental and public health goals by protecting sensitive watersheds, minimizing water quality impacts from development, reducing air emissions by increasing transportation choices, and encouraging the cleanup and sustainable redevelopment of Brownfields.

Successful applicants must demonstrate expertise in smart growth and experience working collaboratively to find common ground on growth and development issues. Smart growth is development that serves the economy, the community, public health, and the environment. It is characterized by a common set of development principles which have been endorsed and adopted by the Smart Growth Network: mix land uses; take advantage of compact building design; create a range of housing opportunities and choices; create walkable neighborhoods; foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place; preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas; strengthen and direct development towards existing communities; encourage a variety of transportation choices; make development decisions that are predictable, fair and cost-effective; and encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Additional information about the Smart Growth Network can be found at www.smartgrowth.org. Additional information about the current Smart Growth Network Membership and Partner Outreach Program can be found at www.smartgrowth.org/sgn/default.asp#mem.

Section 2: AWARD INFORMATION

EPA expects to award one assistance agreement under this solicitation and expects to have approximately \$140,000 available for first-year activities under this funding cycle. This is subject to the availability of funds under the agency's FY 05 budget (the FY 05 fiscal year begins October 1, 2004). Funding will not occur until fiscal year 2005. The time span for the cooperative agreement awarded under this RFIP is expected to be from December 2004 through December 2009.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for first-year activities for approximately \$140,000 or less. Final grants will be negotiated for a five-year budget and project period, with funding for future years dependent on the availability of funds, agency priorities, and applicant performance. A ceiling of approximately \$725,000 for a five-year agreement is suggested.

Applicants should provide detailed descriptions of the activities proposed for the first-year under this competition, as well as a description of what follow-up activities would be conducted in subsequent years if additional funds are available. The assistance agreement award will be in the form of a cooperative agreement which will entail substantive involvement on the part of U.S. EPA. This will include EPA review and approval of project phases; participation in and collaboration on various phases of the work, including but not limited to newsletter development and development of outreach and education products; and review and approval of all draft and final products.

Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new awards.

Section 3: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Section 3.1: ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include (1) incorporated nonprofit (or not for profit) agencies, institutions, and organizations incorporated or domiciled in the United States, and (2) public (state, county, regional or local) agencies, institutions and organizations. Applicants must be located in, and project activities must be conducted within, the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or a territory or possession of the United States. Nonprofit organizations described in section 501 (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to

apply. Please see section 4.5 for information on eligible activities and costs.

Section 3.2 COST-SHARING OR MATCHING

There are no match or cost-sharing requirements. However, the degree to which the project budget effectively uses EPA funds and leverages matching funds both will be considered as evaluation criteria. Matching funds can include cash or in-kind contributions. Any dollars counted towards match must be for costs that U.S. EPA can fund. Allowable costs for nonprofit organizations are defined in OMB circular A-122; allowable costs for public entities are defined in OMB circular A-87. Conducting a member survey is not an allowable cost under this agreement.

Section 3.3: OTHER

Only one application per applicant will be accepted. To be eligible, applicants must meet all of the following threshold criteria. Threshold criteria will be applied on a pass/fail basis. Failure to meet any of them will render an application ineligible; ineligible applications will not be reviewed.

Threshold Criterion 1: Smart Growth Focus

The proposal must focus on the issues, subjects, and activities targeted by this RFIP and explained under the section entitled "Funding Opportunity Description." The proposal must embody, result in, or encourage smart growth. The proposal must clearly demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the smart growth issues addressed by the project. Applicants must clearly demonstrate expertise in smart growth issues and commitment to smart growth. U.S. EPA will use the smart growth definition outlined in Section 1 ("Funding Opportunity Description") to apply this criterion.

Threshold Criterion 2: Allowable Activities

The proposal must consist of activities authorized under one or more of the following U.S. EPA grant authorities: Clean Air Act Section 103 (b) (3); Clean Water Act Section 104 (b)(3); Solid Waste Disposal Act Section 8001, as amended; Toxic Substances Control Act Section 10; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act Section 20, as supplemented by Public Law 106-74; and Safe Drinking Water Act Sections 1442 (a) and (c). Most of these statutes authorize grants for research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies. The project activities must advance the state of knowledge or transfer information. The term "demonstrations" can encompass the first instance of the pollution control or prevention technique, or an innovative application of a previously used method. The term "research" may include the application of established practices when they contribute to learning about an environmental concept or problem.

Threshold Criterion 3: Environmental Focus

The project's general focus must be one that is specified in the statutes listed above under threshold criterion 2. For most statutes the project must address the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of air, water, or solid/hazardous waste pollution. In the case of grants under the Toxic Substances Control Act or the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, the project must "(carry) out the purposes of the Act." The over-arching focus must be on the statutory purpose of the applicable grant authorities, which in most cases is "to prevent or control pollution." In light of this, proposals relating to topics which are sometimes included within the term "environment" such as recreation, conservation, restoration or habitat protection should describe the relationship of these topics to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.

Threshold Criterion 4: Serve a Public Purpose

This award will be an assistance agreement, not a contract. Proposals must clearly demonstrate how the proposed activities will be of primary benefit to the applicant organization and the public at-large. Proposals must clearly demonstrate how the proposed activities directly support the applicant organization's overall mission and long term goals.

Threshold Criterion 5: Complete Applications That Are Submitted on Time

To be eligible, applications must be complete (as defined in section 4.2) and must be submitted in accordance with the provisions outlined in section 4.3.

Section 4: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Section 4.1: HOW TO GET APPLICATION MATERIALS

This announcement provides all of the instructions needed for preparing an initial proposal. While there are no required application forms or kits, there are format and content requirements which are described below under Section 4.2, "Content and Form of Application Submission." Paper copies of this announcement can be obtained by contacting the EPA personnel listed in Section 7. Electronic copies will be available on the DCED web site (www.epa.gov/smartgrowth).

Section 4.2: CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

To be considered complete and eligible for review, all proposals must include a cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, documentation of qualifications, and (if applicable) confirmation of partner participation and matching funds. There is a 20 page limit (i.e., 20 page sides) for the project description. Applicants also are encouraged to include attachments that help demonstrate their expertise (e.g., sample newsletters, sample smart growth publications or fact sheets). These attachments will be used to help evaluate the proposal against the selection criteria described in Section 5. The following format is required for all proposals:

Cover Letter

The cover letter that accompanies your proposal must be signed by an official with the authority to commit your organization to the project and should be written on your organization's official letterhead.

Summary Information Page

The summary information page should be one-page long and include the following information:

--the title and number of this RFIP (Smart Growth Network Membership Program, SGNMEMB-05)

--project title and location

--applicant name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address

-- name and title of project contact (including how to reach if different from above)

--type of applicant organization (e.g., nonprofit, local government, state government, etc.)

--summary budget information (amount requested from U.S. EPA; amount and source of any matching funds)

-- 10 to 20 line abstract of the proposal

Project Description (20 page side maximum)

The project description must provide a concise overview of the project and should include a preliminary workplan outlining all major tasks, products, and timetables. The narrative must address how the applicant will approach each of the core elements of the program (see Section 1) as well as any additional member benefits being proposed. For example, detail should be provided regarding the structure and content of the newsletter; the structure and content of the web page; the number of queries the applicant plans to respond to on a monthly basis; what the contents of the new member starter kit would be; how strategies for marketing, outreach and collaboration with partners would be implemented; the proposed content, scope and length of the smart growth primer and the additional smart growth information resources called for under core elements 2 and 3, etc.. The narrative must also address how the proposal meets each of the threshold and selection criteria, and what environmental results the applicant expects. If other project partners or funding sources are involved, their role and contribution must be clearly defined. The project descriptions must use no smaller than 10 point type, should have page margins all around of at least one inch, and should be no longer than 20 page sides. Additional project description pages will not be considered.

Budget

The project budget should include personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, and other relevant direct costs. Indirect costs should also be included. Entries under each category should be explained in a budget narrative. The travel budget should include attendance at the Annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference, currently sponsored by the Local Government Commission (see www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/SmartGrowth). If the budget includes matching funds, documentation of the source of the match must be provided or these funds will not be considered when the proposal is evaluated (see confirmation of partner participation below).

Documentation of Qualifications

The applicant must include short profiles of all principal staff who will have a major role in the project. Where applicable, this includes principal staff from partner organizations (this includes contractors if contractors will be used). These profiles must specifically address each individual's experience with smart growth issues and their areas of expertise related to the project.

Confirmation of Partner Participation And/or Match (if applicable)

Applicants who are partnering with other organizations, agencies or institutions must include a letter from the partner, on partner letterhead, indicating the partner's role in the project (including whether or not they will be providing matching funds). Each partner letter must be signed by an individual with the authority to commit the partner to the project. Letters confirming partner confirmation must be included in the initial proposal package and will not be accepted separately. Proposals relying on partner participation which are missing documentation of that participation will be considered ineligible. Proposals that would direct some of the funds awarded through this RFIP to partners must provide information on the competitive process used to select those partners. If the applicant itself is providing matching funds, this must be specified in the proposal.

Attachments

Applicants are encouraged to include copies of relevant products they have created (e.g., newsletters, smart growth publications) that demonstrate their smart growth expertise and programmatic capability. The attachments will be used to help evaluate the proposal against the selection criteria in Section 5. Attachments must be included in the proposal package and will not be accepted separately.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING HOW APPLICATION SHOULD BE SUBMITTED AND WHAT WILL HAPPEN FOLLOWING SELECTION

Applicants must submit one original and four copies of their full proposal (if attachments are provided, this includes five copies of all attachments --originals of these are not required). E-mail and fax submissions will not be accepted. Following selection, successful applicants will be required to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., federal form SF 424 and associated documentation) and a detailed workplan. These items should not be provided with the initial proposal. Applicants should be aware that there may be a two to four week turnaround period required if they are asked to submit a formal request for funding assistance.

Section 4.3: SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

U.S. EPA must receive proposals by 5 PM East Coast time July 16, 2004 . No late proposals will be accepted. No fax or e-mail submissions will be accepted. Postmarks or meter stamps will not be considered sufficient documentation of on time delivery.

Section 4.4: INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

All applicants should be aware that formal requests for assistance (i.e., SF 424 and associated documentation) may be subject to intergovernmental review under Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants should contact their state's single point of contact (SPOC) for further information. There is a list of these contacts at the following web site: <http://whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

Section 4.5: FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

Funding is only available for the activities authorized under one or more of the U.S. EPA grant authorities

cited in Section 3.3, threshold criteria 2 and 3. Funding will not be permitted for construction activity, lobbying, or entertainment expenses. Pre-award costs and equipment costs are allowable only with written consent from EPA. Allowable costs for nonprofit organizations are defined in OMB circular A-122; allowable costs for public entities are defined in OMB circular A-87. All procurement actions conducted by recipients (e.g., contracting out part of the work under the assistance agreement) should be conducted in a manner that promotes open and free competition to the maximum extent practical. If applicants plan to use sub grants, they are encouraged to award them through a competitive process.

Section 4.6: OTHER SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must submit one original and four copies of their full proposal. The full proposal includes the cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, documentation of qualifications, documentation of partner participation/match (if applicable), and supporting attachments (if applicable). If supporting attachments are submitted, they must be submitted in the same package with the full proposal and five copies of the attachments should be included (there is no requirement for original attachments). All applications must be submitted in paper copy in accordance with the requirements stated above. No fax or e-mail submissions will be accepted. As mentioned in section 4.2, postmarks or meters will not be considered sufficient documentation of on time delivery. Only one application per applicant is permitted.

The delivery address for submitting your proposal will vary depending on whether you are mailing your proposal or arranging for hand delivery. If you are sending your proposal via hand delivery (e.g., UPS, Federal Express, courier or some other means) send it to:

Lynn Desautels
U.S. EPA
Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation
Development, Community and Environment Division
1301 Constitution Avenue N.W.
room 1417 J
Washington, D.C. 20004

If you are mailing your proposal, send it to:

Lynn Desautels
U.S. EPA Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation
Development, Community and Environment Division
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W. mail code 1807 T
Washington, D.C. 20460

Please note that there may be substantial delays in conventional mail service to U.S. EPA due to heightened security screening

Section 5: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1: SELECTION CRITERIA

If the proposal meets the threshold criteria articulated in Section 3.3 above, it will then be evaluated against the following selection criteria:

1. Degree to which applicant demonstrates success and expertise running comparable membership/outreach programs
2. Degree to which applicant demonstrates expertise in smart growth and in developing smart growth informational materials
3. Quality of proposed core membership program components
4. Quality of additional membership program components

5. Degree to which project effectively uses EPA funds
6. Degree to which project effectively leverages matching funds
7. Degree to which applicant demonstrates history of successful partnering with other organizations on collaborative projects
8. Programmatic capability and likelihood of success

Proposals will be scored against each of the evaluation factors using a numerical scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high. All evaluation factors will be weighed equally.

5.2: REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

EPA will evaluate each of the selection criteria above based on information provided in the proposal and any relevant attachments. Programmatic capability (criteria 8) refers to the administrative and management capabilities of an organization. In evaluating programmatic capability, EPA will consider the qualifications of key personnel as well as the applicant's past performance administering projects funded by EPA or other federal agencies. Applicants should discuss their performance history in their proposals and provide contacts for EPA to obtain additional information. If applicants have not received federal funding before, they should provide other information that would help demonstrate their organization's capability to successfully manage grant funds. This might include but is not limited to administration of programs funded through state grants or foundations.

In addition to the factors above, EPA may also consider such factors as the overall excellence and innovation of a project, geographic diversity, and applicant diversity (i.e., type of organization).

5.3: ANTICIPATED ANNOUNCEMENT AND AWARD DATES

see Section 6.1.

Section 6: AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1: AWARD NOTICES

Successful applicants will receive an official notice of award from EPA's grant management office. EPA will announce successful recipients on the DCED smart growth web site (www.epa.gov/smartgrowth). This information will be posted within thirty days after U.S. EPA's Grants Administration Division issues a written offer of award to the recipient. U.S. EPA anticipates that awards will be announced in or around December 2004.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via mail or e-mail in the fall of 2004. Applicants who do not pass threshold screening will be notified during the summer of 2004 before final award decisions are made.

Applicants should be aware that they are not authorized to begin performance on a project until they have received their official award document; preaward costs are undertaken at the recipient's risk.

6.2: ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must comply with the standard requirements, terms and conditions of EPA assistance agreements. Funded activities must be allowable under EPA statutory authority (see section 3). All recipients must have a Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number on their formal SF 424 applications. A DUNS number can be obtained by calling 1-866-705-5711. A DUNS number is not required for initial proposals.

At the termination of the cooperative agreement awarded under this RFIP, the recipient will be required to provide U.S. EPA with all tools and materials developed in whole or in part with federal funding under it. EPA will use these tools and materials only for federal purposes.

In accordance with 40 CFR 30.36, EPA retains a royalty free, nonexclusive and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use materials produced under this cooperative agreement for federal purposes. EPA retains a similar right regarding copyrighted materials developed under this assistance agreement.

Program income earned during the life of this assistance agreement (the project period) will be added to funds committed to the project by U.S. EPA. The award recipient must use the earned income for allowable costs which support activities authorized under the agreement. Any royalty income for copyrighted material must be similarly directed.

6.3: REPORTING

Recipients will be required to submit quarterly progress reports and will have to participate in annual reviews of their projects with their U.S. EPA project officer. A project officer will be designated at the time of the award of the cooperative agreement; that project officer will work in partnership with the recipient.

Section 7: AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have questions about this solicitation, please contact:

Lynn Desautels
U.S. EPA Development Community and Environment Division
Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Mail code 1807 T
Washington, D.C. 20004
phone: 202-566-2840
desautels.lynn@epa.gov

Answers to frequently asked questions will be posted on the DCED smart growth web site (www.epa.gov/smartgrowth). The only pre-application assistance available under this competition will be related to clarifying the requirements of the RFIP.

Section 8: OTHER INFORMATION

Both initial proposals and formal requests for funding are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. This means that anyone can request, and receive, copies of them. Applicants should clearly mark information they consider confidential. U.S. EPA will make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with agency regulations (40CFR part 2, subpart B).

Any disputes regarding funding decisions will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR part 30 or 31, depending on the applicant. U.S. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards.